

Acknowledgements

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The generic names of the British Carabidae (Coleoptera) explained

I thought it might possibly be instructive, and not without interest, to run through a series of generic names giving their literal or original meanings where possible. Such names are among the stock-in-trade of entomologists, few of whom have any inkling of how they came about – except for the minority of names that bear their meanings on their surface. Nowadays, most of their users have “small Latin and less Greek” so that associative memory has little to work on, and analytical understanding tends to be slight.

The British Carabidae will serve well enough to illustrate a typically wide range of meanings. The names under consideration will be found to vary widely from the straight-forwardly descriptive – often marking some special feature – to the thoroughly obscure or apparently meaningless, though the latter type is rare. In any group of similar extent, there will always be found a few names that appear to have been bestowed quite arbitrarily, or whose significance is not (or no longer) at all clear; and others that seem downright unsuitable.

Most specific epithets on the other hand (not considered here) are readily understood, provided only that one has a basic smattering of Latin such as most of us have contrived to pick up; while names of genera are commonly based on the other source of scientific words, namely Greek. But even those who have had no formal instruction therein need not despair; for so many of its relevant roots or elements have become familiar through scientific terminology as to make it no longer a firmly closed book.

In the explanations that follow, which I have kept to a direct translation as far as possible, the language of origin is to be understood as Greek if not otherwise stated. The signs for a long (ˉ) and a short (˘) vowel are occasionally used.

<i>Cicindēla</i> :	Latin, "glow-worm" (cf. <i>candēla</i> "candle"). A transferred name, or misnomer.
<i>Omophon</i> :	"of savage disposition".
<i>Cychrus</i> :	apparently shortened from <i>cychramus</i> "corncrake" (Aristotle, Pliny), now used for a genus of Nitidulidae. A reference to the beetle's stridulation is possible.
<i>Carabus</i> :	name of the stag-beetle (also the crayfish) in Aristotle. Allied to <i>Scarabaeus</i> .
<i>Calosōma</i> :	"beautiful body".
<i>Leistus</i> :	"robber, pirate, plunderer" (lēistes).
<i>Pēlophila</i> :	"mud-loving".
<i>Nebria</i> :	"a fawn"; reference hardly clear.
<i>Nōtiophilus</i> :	"damp-loving".
<i>Blēthisa</i> :	"thrown"; no explanation seems possible.
<i>Elaphrus</i> :	light, nimble.
<i>Loricera</i> :	"thong-horned", from the bristles on the antennae.
<i>Dyschirius</i> :	"weak handed", from the short thin pro-tarsi, or perhaps "hard to manage".
<i>Clivina</i> :	Latin <i>clivus</i> "a slope" seems pointless; probably an invented name.
<i>Brosicus</i> :	"feeding, grazing, browsing", from its voracity.
<i>Miscodera</i> :	a tautological name, both parts meaning "neck", on account of the evident "waist" between thorax and hind-body.
<i>Patrobus</i> :	unclear.
<i>Perileptus</i> :	"of slender outline".
<i>Aepus</i> :	"steep, difficult" (application hardly clear).
<i>Thalassophilus</i> :	"sea-loving" (a misnomer as it frequents edges of <i>fresh</i> water).
<i>Trēchus</i> :	"running".
<i>Asaphidion</i> :	"inconspicuous", with diminutive ending taken from next.
<i>Bembidion</i> :	"a little spinning-top".
<i>Tāchys</i> :	"swift".
<i>Pōgōnus</i> :	apparently "bearded" (pōgōn "beard"); hardly clear.
<i>Stomis</i> :	"having a prominent mouth" (stōma).
<i>Perostichus</i> :	refers to the "wing-rows", i.e. elytral striae.
<i>Abax</i> :	"a flat plate", from its broad flat surface.
<i>Calāthus</i> :	"a wicker basket" (application unclear).
<i>Sphodrus</i> :	general sense "large and powerful".
<i>Laemostēnus</i> :	"narrow throat" (should have been <i>Stenolaemus</i>).
<i>Platydērus</i> :	"(with) broad neck" (i.e. pronotum).
<i>Synūchus</i> :	apparently "holding (or held) together"; unclear.
<i>Olisthopus</i> :	"slippery-footed".
<i>Agōnum</i> :	"without angles" (of the pronotum).
<i>Perigōna</i> :	<i>peri</i> "around", <i>gōnon</i> "angle"; hardly clear.
<i>Amāra</i> :	usually explained as Latin <i>amārus</i> "bitter", from the difficulty in identifying them.
<i>Zabrus</i> :	apparently an invented name.
<i>Ophonus</i> :	ditto.
<i>Harpālus</i> :	"rapacious, ravenous".
<i>Anisodactylus</i> :	"unequal fingers", with reference to clothing of underside of male protarsi.
<i>Scybalicus</i> :	"associated with rubbish".

- Diachrōmus*: “of diverse colours”.
Dicheirotrichus: “with two hands hairy”, i.e. the soles of male protarsi.
Bradycellus: “slow-moving”.
Stēnolōphus: “narrow crest” (application hardly clear).
Acupalpus: Latin, “with needle-like palpi”.
Līcīnus: name of a barber and wealthy freedman of the emperor Augustus.
Badister: “a walker”. (cf. *Dromius*)
Panagaeus: “all-admirable”.
Chlaenius: chlaina, a woollen cloak worn by the Greeks.
Callistus: “fairest, most beautiful”.
Oodes (3 syllables): egg-shaped, ovoid”.
Odacantha: Greek *odous* “tooth” and *akanthos* “thorn” (meaning thorn-like tooth?).
Masoreus: origin obscure.
Lebia: lēbias, a kind of fish, is the nearest word.
Demētrias: a city in Thessaly, Greece (Dēmēter “earth mother” = Ceres.)
Dromius: drōmeus “a runner”.
Microlēstes: “little robber”, cf. *Leistus*.
Metablētus: “turning, changing direction”.
Lionychus: “smooth claw” (of tarsi).
Cymindis: “a night-hawk” (application obscure or arbitrary).
Polistichus: for *Polystichus* “many rows”, with reference to the striae.
Drypta: an over-ripe, mouldy olive. (If descriptive, a very poor effort!)
Brachinus: evidently based on *brachys* “short”, but the reason is not apparent.

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An unsuccessful attempt at rearing *Dahlica inconspicuella* (Stt.) (Lep.: Psychidae)

On 28 January 2001, I collected larval cases of *Dahlica inconspicuella* from beneath discarded roofing felt just above the strand line on the shingle beach at Dungeness, East Kent. These produced three adults (one male and two females) over the following month, but I was unable to obtain a pairing due to the male having died before the females emerged. As I wished to rear this species, I contacted Dennis O’Keeffe and he agreed to send me further material. This he collected from the same locality on 2 April, and thirteen cases duly arrived in the post at 08.30 hours on 4 April. On unpacking these I found one female, which emerged in transit, had adopted a “calling” posture. By 18.00 hours three further females and a male had emerged. It was apparent that the male had paired with three of the females, as their abdomens, void of ova, showed that these individuals had oviposited. The remaining female died a few days later, presumably unmated as it did not oviposit. No further adults emerged from this material.

Ovipositing females laid in their larval case, beneath their pupal exuviae which projected from the anterior end of their case. Ova were oval in shape, creamy white in colour and with a soft smooth chorion, no obvious sculpturing being visible at ×25 magnification. Investigation of the cases showed that nine contained ova, hence six must have held ova at the time of collection as only three females had oviposited in captivity.

By 27 April, two small, pale-brown spots were visible through the chorion of one ovum, positioned towards one end. These darkened and enlarged over the following three or four days, and as this process advanced it became clear that these were the developing eyes and head capsule of the larva within. On 3 May, newly emerged